

Georgia Library Quarterly

Volume 44 | Issue 4

Article 34

January 2008

REVIEW: Return to Good and Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Response to Nihilism

Leslie R. G. Bullington

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq>



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bullington, Leslie R. G. (2008) "REVIEW: Return to Good and Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Response to Nihilism," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 44 : Iss. 4 , Article 34.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol44/iss4/34>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Library Quarterly by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

Jamestown). Each entry is signed by its author and followed by source notes. Many readers will miss the distinction between the two sections; there are no headings to mark the division. The volume is well-indexed, but there are no cross-references to the other volumes, a lack that limits the usefulness of an otherwise excellent resource. The encyclopedia is being published in paperback as well as hardcover, which will make the 24-volume set more affordable. Recommended for all academic libraries and most public libraries. »»

— Reviewed by **Vanessa Cowie**
Forsyth County Public Library

Return to Good and Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Response to Nihilism by Henry T. Edmondson III; contributor Marion Montgomery (Lexington Books, 1st Paperback Edition 2005; ISBN 0739111051, \$27.95).

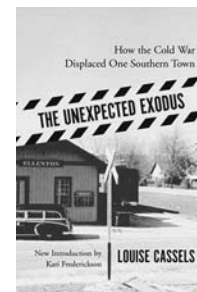
Professor Henry T. Edmondson III has done a great service for readers of Flannery O'Connor in his book *Return to Good and Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Response to Nihilism*. He has gone where so many O'Connor scholars would love to go: deep into Georgia College and State University's special collection of her personal library and published and unpublished manuscripts, and has emerged with a wealth of knowledge about the philosophical and theological foundations of her work. He shares this knowledge in a series of clear, thought-provoking, enlightening discussions of her short stories and novels that provide readers with a greater sense of O'Connor's worldview and purpose than can be gained from reading her fictional work in isolation. Edmondson centers his discussions on O'Connor's implicit desire to refute the troubling influence of nihilism in modern culture; thus, the discussions of O'Connor's art often address the greater issue of the moral decline of a society that seeks to antiquate notions of good and evil. O'Connor's goal was to create "large and startling pictures" to shock her willfully sightless audience into sensing the necessity for redemption and the presence of grace at work in the world. O'Connor's pictures are held up to the light by Edmondson, who points out themes and nuances rooted in her Catholicism and makes reference to the influence of others such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Frederick Copleston, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, Jacques Maritain and Pascal. Edmondson's ideas on O'Connor's fiction and philosophy are firmly based on her own explications of her stories in letters and lectures and in the works of the theologians she most admired. Flannery O'Connor lived most of her life in Milledgeville, Georgia, and is arguably the most



influential writer to come from this region of the country. This book of essays on her work would be a valuable part of the collection of any public or academic library in Georgia. »»

— Reviewed by **Leslie R. G. Bullington**
Augusta, Georgia

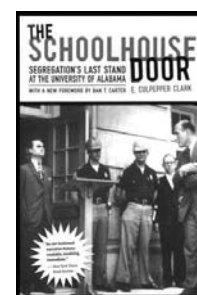
The Unexpected Exodus: How the Cold War Displaced One Southern Town by Louise Cassels (University of South Carolina Press, 2007; ISBN 978-1-57003-709-2, ISBN 1-57003-709-4, \$19.95).



Historian Susan A. Crane wrote an article titled "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory" that appeared in the December 1997 *American Historical Review*. Louise Cassels' book *The Unexpected Exodus* writes into history the collective memory of all the former residents of Ellenton, S.C., as they were forced to relocate to make way for the construction of the Savannah River Plant. The Savannah River Plant was constructed at the beginning of the Cold War to produce materials for weapons or fuel for power purposes. Louise Cassels was a schoolteacher and a member of the most prominent family in Ellenton. She provides readers with a vivid account of the hopes, fears and concerns of the citizens of Ellenton before and after the announcement of their need to relocate to make way for the plant. The emotions of the citizens of this small South Carolina community ran from anger to feelings of patriotism. This book not only provides insight into how the construction of the plant affected this one community but also into how the military industrial complex changed the economy of the South. Louise Cassels demonstrates that the individual really does matter in history. First published in 1971, the book will be a welcome addition to the collections of public and academic libraries. »»

— Reviewed by **Diane Fulkerson**
University of West Georgia

The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama by E. Culpepper Clark (University of Alabama Fire Ant Books, 2007, ISBN 9780817354336, \$24.95).



Some of us remember former Alabama Governor George Wallace's infamous schoolhouse door stand at the University of Alabama as he attempted to bar federal authorities from enforcing segregation in